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Mrs Locke
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Locke

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme – Music

Thank you for your assistance and hospitality, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 23 and 24 January 2007. At the end of the inspection I fed back my judgements and this letter is to confirm my findings.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the extent to which every pupil is benefiting from your music provision. It also explored the links you have developed with other schools and agencies, such as the local Music Service.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text unless to highlight exceptional practice. In such circumstances the school would be contacted prior to publication to agree the exact wording. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with members of staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of music was judged to be satisfactory with good features. There is good capacity for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall with areas of strength, particularly in singing.

- Pupils enjoy their music lessons and sing very well with clear diction and a developing sense of phrase. Their rhythmical development is secure and they achieve broadly in line with national expectations by the end of each

key stage. However, pupils' progress is limited by insufficient opportunities in class lessons to respond at the higher levels of attainment.

- Many pupils have instrumental tuition within and outside of the school. They perform well on their instruments and enjoy taking part in whole school music events which impressively involve all pupils. However, ensemble skills would be improved and enjoyment increased through more opportunity for pupils to play together in regular ensembles. Pupils expressed a wish for such experiences.

Quality of teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with significant strengths in the teaching of singing.

- The teaching of singing is good. Effective strategies are used and expectations are high. Appropriately challenging songs are chosen and pupils learn to sing confidently with understanding of singing techniques.
- However, while other musical skills are also developed, the learning objectives are not always clear enough for pupils to understand what they need to do to further improve the quality of their work. Clearer learning objectives would also help to increase the pace and sustained energy of the lesson.
- There is good instrumental teaching shown, for example, in the way pupils are able to improvise and perform their own melodies in the school concerts. The school has sensibly encouraged pupils to learn in groups and is exploring opportunities for pupils to learn instruments together as a whole class.

Quality of the music curriculum and extra-curricular provision

The overall quality of the curriculum and extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.

- Pupils receive a regular weekly lesson taught by a specialist. They also enjoy a singing session/hymn practice for half an hour each week. The curriculum is currently based strongly on a published scheme and the school is aware of the need to adapt this scheme more closely to the needs of each class.
- Lessons are taught in the school hall and while this provides the space needed for the practical activities it is not easy to create the atmosphere needed to engage pupils thoroughly in the work. Appropriate consideration is being given to using part of the hall and to finding ways to help the youngest pupils feel more at ease.
- The involvement of all pupils in whole school music events is excellent. However, there are insufficient opportunities for all instrumentalists to perform regularly together in groups.

Leadership and management of music

The leadership and management of music are satisfactory overall.

- The school is very supportive of the music provision. Although class teachers do not attend the music sessions, some teachers make good use of music throughout the week. All teachers contribute to the whole school music events. The school is sensibly considering ways in which the teaching assistants can provide even more support to the specialist music teacher, for example through helping individual pupils between the music lessons.
- While the school benefits considerably from employing the specialist music teacher for part of the week, this arrangement makes it difficult to ensure all aspects of the music provision are co-ordinated effectively. As a result there is a lack of information on pupils' overall musical progress and so it is not possible to ensure appropriate support or challenge is given when needed.

Subject issues

Data Collection

- The collection of information about pupils' musical learning and experiences is at an early stage of development.

Partnership Links

- Good links are made with the Barnet music service which provides instrumental teachers and involves pupils in musical festivals. There are also good opportunities for some pupils to perform in regional ensembles.
- Very good links have been developed with parents and the local community.

Inclusion

- All pupils are included well in class lessons and there is good opportunity for all to learn a musical instrument. However, the school is aware that further information and analysis is needed to ensure all groups of pupils are equally involved.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the clarity of the learning objectives and making sure all pupils know what they need to do to improve the quality of their work
- improving the co-ordination of all musical experiences to ensure pupils receive appropriate support and challenge when needed
- finding ways to enable all instrumentalists to perform together more frequently.

I very much hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop music in your school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

In 6-12 months after the inspection visit, we would like to gather information on the impact of this inspection on the improvements in this subject in your school. To this end you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete. We appreciate your co-operation in this evaluation.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools